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# Security Council

Sixty-second year

*Provisional*

**5788**th meeting

Friday, 30 November 2007, 10 a.m.

New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Natalegawa | (Indonesia) |
| *Members*: | Belgium | Mr. Verbeke |
| | China | Mr. Li Junhua |
| | Congo | Mr. Okio |
| | France | Mr. Ripert |
| | Ghana | Mr. Christian |
| | Italy | Mr. Spatafora |
| | Panama | Mr. Arias |
| | Peru | Mr. Chávez |
| | Qatar | Mr. Al-Qahtani |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Dolgov |
| | Slovakia | Mr. Matulay |
| | South Africa | Mr. Sangqu |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sir John Sawers |
| | United States of America | Mr. Wolff |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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07-62028 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

**The President**: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Pascoe**: Three days ago, the most significant breakthrough in the peace process in several years was achieved. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas reached a joint understanding, read out by President Bush at the opening of the Annapolis conference. That agreement had three important elements.

First, the leaders agreed to immediately launch good-faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty, resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception, as specified in previous agreements. They agreed to make every effort to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008.

Secondly, they agreed that a joint steering committee is to meet continuously. The committee will oversee the work of negotiations teams, and its first meeting will be held on 12 December 2007. The two leaders also agreed that they will meet together on a biweekly basis.

Thirdly, they committed to immediately implement their respective obligations under the Road Map and agreed to form an American, Palestinian and Israeli mechanism, led by the United States, to follow up on implementation. The leaders further committed to continue the implementation of the ongoing obligations under the Road Map until they reach a peace treaty. The United States will monitor and judge the fulfilment of the commitment by both sides. Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, implementation of the future peace treaty will be subject to the implementation of the Road Map.

In addition to the joint understanding, the Israeli and Palestinian leaders individually addressed each other, the conference participants and the world. President Abbas said that "on this day, we stretch our hands to you as equal partners in peace", stating that it was not impossible to achieve peace if there was will and good faith. He also spoke about his determination to fight terrorism "under all circumstances and from any source", saying, "We do this for our own people because we must, not because it is a political requirement".

Prime Minister Olmert underlined his acknowledgement of Palestinian suffering, including that of the refugees. He stated that he knew that that pain and deprivation were one of the deepest foundations that had fomented the ethos of hatred. He added that he had no doubt that the reality created in the region in 1967 would change significantly, and he acknowledged that this would be an extremely difficult process and that many of his people knew that but were ready for it.

The joint understanding was given added significance by the context in which it was presented. President Bush opened the conference and pledged to devote his efforts during his time as President to doing all that he could to help the parties achieve their ambitious goal. He gave his personal commitment to support their work with the resources and the resolve of the American Government.

In addition to the host and the parties, other participants in the Annapolis conference included the Secretary-General and other Quartet members, the five permanent members of the Security Council, the Group of Eight industrialized nations, other significant donors and supporters of the process and, importantly, the representatives of the League of Arab States. Their participation signalled Arab support for the efforts of President Abbas and the determination of the Arab League to participate actively in the search for peace. Arab League members underlined their continued, united support for the Arab Peace Initiative and their

belief in the need to achieve comprehensive peace in the region.

On the evening before the opening of the conference, the Quartet principals met in Washington and expressed their strong support for the conference. They welcomed the commitment of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to launch bilateral negotiations towards the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza and, ultimately, of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The statement noted that that achievement reflected

> "the results of months of work by the parties and by the Quartet, including the Quartet's engagement with members of the Arab League Follow-Up Committee to expand the circle of support for peace".

As part of the continuing process, the Quartet will meet next month, on the sidelines of the Paris Conference, and looks forward to meeting once again with members of the Arab League.

The Annapolis conference also included extensive discussion of international support for building the institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority, setting the stage for the upcoming donor conference to be held in Paris. The Paris conference will provide an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate its determination to improve the situation on the ground. Economic recovery and the creation of a secure environment will be key to gaining popular confidence in the renewed process.

The Palestinian Authority has been working hard on preparations for Paris. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Fayyad circulated a summary of the Palestinian reform and development plan for 2008-2010. The plan, which will form the basis of the Palestinian Authority's presentation to the donor community, demonstrates fiscal responsibility and political commitment to reform. It also lays out what Israel and the international community should do in parallel to help the Palestinian Authority to meet its economic and institutional priorities over the next three years. We trust that the plan will prove to be a solid basis for securing new financial commitments from international partners, including those in the region. We urge Council members to give it their early consideration.

During his recent trip to the region, Quartet Representative Tony Blair joined Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad and Israeli Defence Minister Barak to highlight several initiatives that will have a substantial economic impact on the ground. If carried through, this trilateral partnership for economic recovery and growth will serve to build the confidence of Israelis and Palestinians in a peaceful settlement.

In the lead-up to the Annapolis conference, a number of developments provided important building blocks. The Palestinian Authority took steps on phase I Road Map obligations through the deployment of 300 security forces in Nablus in a bid to crack down on militants and impose law and order. That has led to a significant improvement in the security environment in Nablus. The Israeli Government has facilitated this deployment by allowing the transfer of weapons, ammunition and equipment. However, night raids by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) into Nablus continue, posing a challenge to the goal of ensuring Palestinian Authority security control.

The Israeli Government announced a further release of 441 Palestinian prisoners — a decision that has yet to be implemented. Settlement activity continues, and no outposts have yet been dismantled. We encourage both parties to make every effort to implement all commitments and build mutual trust.

I also wish to stress the active Arab diplomacy in the lead-up to the conference. A number of regional meetings were held ahead of the Annapolis conference, with Egypt taking the lead in hosting Arab leaders and Quartet Representative Blair. President Mubarak of Egypt also met Israeli Prime Minister Olmert on 20 November in Sharm el-Sheikh. In addition to a discussion on the Annapolis conference, there was a positive agreement to intensify cooperation to stop smuggling into the Gaza Strip. Also, on 18 November, King Abdullah of Jordan paid his first visit to Damascus since February 2004.

We have reason to be hopeful in the light of those developments, but we must not close our eyes to the difficulties on the ground. Violence continues to plague Palestinians and Israelis. During the reporting period, 42 Palestinians were killed and more than 133 injured, among them four children killed during Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank. More than 346 Palestinians have been detained by the IDF. Two Israelis have been killed and six injured. IDF Corporal

Gilad Shalit is in his eighteenth month of captivity in Gaza. Rockets and mortars continue to be fired by Palestinian militants on crossing points between Israel and Gaza as well as at Israeli population centres. During the period, rocket attacks by militants from Gaza have increased to more than 116 rockets and 121 mortars. The Secretary-General continues to condemn all acts of terrorism and all acts that target civilians or endanger them owing to the disproportionate or indiscriminate character of such acts.

Factional fighting among Palestinians intensified — mostly in Gaza — resulting in 18 deaths, among them three children. In one particular incident, on 12 November, Hamas policemen fired on a rally of over 250,000 participants held to commemorate the death of President Arafat. The rally degenerated into rioting, and seven Fatah members were killed and some 100 were wounded. Approximately 400 Fatah supporters were arrested.

The humanitarian situation on the ground, particularly in Gaza, continues to be a source of acute concern — and one that the Secretary-General has raised strongly in public statements, in writing to his Quartet colleagues and with all interlocutors at Annapolis. Karni, the principal crossing for commercial goods into and out of Gaza, remains closed. A recent food security study conducted by the World Food Programme found that although critical United Nations humanitarian food supplies are being allowed in, only 41 per cent of basic commercial food needs have been met in the past six weeks. The market has continued to witness significant price rises and shortages of commodities such as wheat grain, vegetable oil, dairy products and baby milk. In one positive development, on Wednesday, the Israeli Government permitted the export of strawberries and flowers from Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

Rafah, the principal passenger crossing to Egypt for 1.5 million Gazans, also remains closed. Approximately 6,400 Gazans with foreign citizenship, permanent residency, work permits, student visas or university admissions have not been able to exit Gaza since June, including 670 students who are being prevented from pursuing higher education abroad. Access to specialized medical care for Gazan patients requiring treatment in Israel, the West Bank and Egypt continues to be affected, with 10 Gazans, including two women and an infant, dying since August after being prevented from leaving Gaza to receive emergency care. Spare parts are not allowed entry into Gaza, leaving medical and water sanitation equipment in disrepair.

The political divide among Palestinians continued. Hamas continues to establish structures in parallel to the Palestinian Authority and convened an illegal session of the Palestinian Legislative Council to cancel all decrees taken by President Abbas since June. In the West Bank, Palestinian Authority security forces have continued to arrest Hamas militants, and Hamas security forces have continued to arrest Fatah members in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has denounced the Annapolis conference, and held protest demonstrations in both Gaza and the West Bank.

Let me turn now to Lebanon. The term of President Lahoud came to an end on 23 November at midnight. The constitutional deadline to select a new President for Lebanon by 24 November passed without the election taking place. The parliamentary session scheduled then for 30 November has been postponed to 7 December. That marked the sixth postponement of a parliamentary session to elect the new President in the past two months. Extensive diplomatic efforts aimed at mediating between the parties in Lebanon and beyond are ongoing, with the purpose of bridging the political divide. The majority and the opposition have indicated that they will continue the negotiations.

The Secretary-General visited Lebanon on 15 and 16 November, with the aim of promoting the election of a new President within the constitutional time frame and provisions and with the broadest possible support. The Secretary-General met with the Speaker of the Parliament, the Prime Minister, majority leader Hariri, the Maronite Patriarch and a wide range of leaders from across the political spectrum. He urged Lebanese leaders, including presidential hopefuls, to place the national interest above their personal and sectarian interests at this crucial time in Lebanon's history.

During the reporting period, the Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) visited the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr el-Bared in order to examine the UNRWA-led emergency assistance and recovery effort. The recovery and reconstruction process of the camp is an

extremely complex undertaking that will require very close cooperation between the Lebanese Government and UNRWA. The current estimated cost of the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared is $200 million. Of the $54 million that UNRWA requested for the flash appeal only $28 million has been received so far.

UNRWA is working with affected refugees, the parties on the ground, the Lebanese Government, the army, donors and local communities to ensure that immediate and longer-term needs can be met. In the face of the enormous devastation of the camp, UNRWA's efforts to address immediate needs and restore some semblance of normal life for refugees have led to the return of nearly 1,000 families in an area on the periphery of the camp known as the "new camp".

Israeli air violations of the Blue Line and Lebanese airspace continued throughout the reporting period. For a part of the month, the number of overflights increased significantly, and these were sometimes undertaken at low altitudes, breaking the sound barrier in populated areas, which caused considerable stress and frustration to the local population. We note the security concerns that Israel says compel it to continue those overflights, specifically allegations of violations of the arms embargo established pursuant to resolution 1701 (2006). However, overflights nevertheless also remain violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and also continue to undermine the credibility of both the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

In a letter to you, Mr. President, dated 28 November, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council of his intention to appoint Robert Serry of the Netherlands as the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. The Secretary-General looks forward to Mr. Serry working to consolidate the efforts of the United Nations to support the political process that was announced in Annapolis and to coordinate the work of the United Nations country team. In the meantime, Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, currently the Director of the Mine Action Service in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, has been appointed to serve as Deputy Special Coordinator ad interim.

We come away from Annapolis with a clear way forward. In his remarks at the conference, the Secretary-General pledged the full support of the United Nations family for the renewed effort. He stressed the need for the joint understanding to be implemented through the beginning of final status negotiations, support to the Palestinian Authority and action to meet commitments on the ground. He noted, "Success depends not on what we say today, but on what we do tomorrow". The Secretary-General also emphasized his continuing concern for the humanitarian suffering of the population of Gaza and called for concrete initiatives to ease their suffering. He underlined the need to restore the unity of Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority, and he lent his support to efforts to explore the possibilities for comprehensive peace.

For 60 years the Israeli State has feared for its survival and the survival of its people. For 60 years the Palestinian people have wandered and suffered in search of a State. It is time for the Palestinians to have a home of their own. It is time for the Israelis to feel at peace in their home. The time to act is now. Let us go forward and each play our part.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

*The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.*